



Steps to Plan an Event



It starts as a simple idea: Children and parents, school and local officials walking to school together on a designated day. It's an energizing event, reminding everyone of the simple joy of walking to school, the health benefits of regular daily activity, and the sense of safety and community that comes with being out together. Some schools focus on health and fitness messages, while other schools focus on safety training for pedestrians and drivers.

But for most communities, one day isn't enough. Many realize that what they really want is for children to be able to walk to school every day, not just as a special event. And that can lead to the kinds of permanent changes that make the community better for everyone. Better sidewalks, safer street crossings, and improved driver and pedestrian behavior can benefit everyone, young and old, while making streets safer and the community healthier. So follow these steps to launch a walk to school event. You can't imagine what you might be starting!

Step 1: Learn more about Walk to School Day and what is happening across Nebraska and the Nation!

We have provided many materials in this packet that can aid in this process, but we also encourage you to use the web as a source of national information.

Step 2: Contact the three P's (Principals, Parents, Police) and propose a Walk to School Day event in your community

- The school principal can give you the school's commitment.
- The local police department is a valuable resource and will ensure that safety is a priority.
- Parents add energy and enthusiasm and make the walk work.
- Why are the principals, parents, and police so important? They represent the quickest way to get things started.

Step 3: Invite elected and public officials, and get them to commit to improve walking conditions.

- Why are they so important? They represent the quickest way to get change started. The media helps do that as well.
- Hold a press conference at the start of your walk, or at school when people arrive. This is a great time for a formal proclamation by elected officials (View sample proclamations). Urge school and public officials to commit to specific steps they'll take to make it easier to walk everyday.

Tips for Talking to the three P's:

- Make sure that the school principal/ administrators, the police, and parents all understand the ways that they and the community will all benefit from participating in Walk to School Day.
- Remember all the benefits of Walk to School Day. Children and parents will be more active, healthier, and spend some time together, traffic and congestion will be reduced, streets near the school may be safer and air quality better as a result, and everyone will have fun.
- Start with a simple premise. Describe the basic idea of Walk to School Day very simply- one day to celebrate walking as a healthy, safe, enjoyable way for children to get to school.
- Give them printed information so that they have something to refer to and remember the conversation by after you've finished talking.
- Approach people as potential partners. Don't just ask for permission, propose partnerships. This means that they can contribute their perspective and feel ownership of the event.
- Encourage others to build on the idea. Encourage others to add to the simple idea, and recognize that each may have a different agenda.
- Prepare key points in the areas of health, safety, and access. Give every potential partner a factor on which to base their involvement.
- Leave the conversation agreeing on a clear next step. Don't walk away until they have either committed to supporting Walk to School Day or to another concrete step. Make an appointment for that follow-up conversation before you leave.

Step 4: Join the world and Walk to School.

Register online to tie in to the international event at

<http://www.walktoschool-usa.org>

- Why an event in October? Because that's when the world will be walking. There will be hundreds of events around the US, and the media and public officials will be aware of this national movement.
- By registering online, you make your event known and provide your contact information to any local and national media hoping to cover this important story. And when the media cover your event, they help spread the word of the great health, safety, environmental and social benefits of more children walking to school every day. You'll also get automatic updates on event plans and available resources for planning your Walk.

Step 5: Decide what type of event fits your school and community.

- You can plan your walk any way that works for your community, but click here to read about some common approaches to consider.
- Classroom teachers can get involved by incorporating walking into their curriculum.

Here are ideas for getting all of your school's classes involved in Walk to School Day:

Art, Computer Class - Create posters promoting Walk to School Day and safe driving and walking messages.

Geography - Survey and create maps of walking routes to school.

Health - Use pedometers to measure steps, or simply measure walking time accumulated by students; study health benefits of physical activity.

Physical Education - Do some physical conditioning. Learn walking warm-ups and stretches and do some progressively longer walks in class to prepare for Walk to School Day.

Mathematics - Keep logs of walking time or steps; calculate speeds and distances, individual and group averages, trends and statistical analyses (do boys or girls walk more?)

Physics - Study the biomechanics of walking. For example, measure stride lengths-do they vary with height, weight, age, leg length? How does walking speed depend on you step speed and stride length?

Biology - Look for specific plant or animal species or inventory indigenous species along walking routes. Catalog seasonal changes in the flora and fauna.

English - Write press releases and public service announcements to promote Walk to School Day. Write essays or keep a diary about your experiences walking.

History - Study historical locations in your community by walking to them.

Social Sciences - Photograph important things in your community that were observed while walking to school. Anything you'd like to change? What can you do about it?

Types of Officials:

- City Council Members
- City Managers
- City Mayors
- Police Departments
- Fire Departments
- Health Departments
- Hospital community outreach departments
- United Way community services
- City Transportation Divisions
- P.E. teachers
- College Students
- Elementary school teachers
- School principals
- PTA members
- Pedestrian advocacy groups
- Bicycle coalitions
- Safe Kids Safe Communities program
- Recreation Departments
- Fitness Councils
- Sierra Club
- Cardiovascular Health Agencies
- Ped/Bike Coordinators
- State Departments of Transportation

Step 6: Give your event a mission.

Each Walk to School event takes on the character of its community and participants. But most find that having one or more specific mission helps make the event have a more lasting impact. The following list gives a variety of sample missions:

- Teach safe walking.
- See if there's a National Safe Kids chapter in your area able to support your effort.
- Measure your neighborhood's "walkability".
- Change driver behavior.
- Get kids moving.
- Inquire who in your state and/or local public health department is doing work to promote physical activity and fight obesity among children. In Nebraska, you may contact the Cardiovascular Health Program (402)-471-2101.

Step 7: Promote the event and day and urge everyone to take part and be aware.

- Write a Public Service Announcement to be read on local radio and television.
- Send out a press release for your event to the local paper.
- Solicit local establishments for sponsorship or support and donations for your Walk to School Event. Examples include:
 - Grocery store, coffee shop, or bakery: Breakfast foods and drinks for kids and parents when they arrive at school.
 - Stationary supply: School supplies for children's prizes (pencils, erasers, etc.)
 - Sporting goods, outdoor, recreation store: Sneakers, book bags, baseball hats, reflective material; small prizes for random drawings for participants, and children who walked farthest, most often, etc.
 - Rotary, Lions Clubs, and community service groups can be volunteer crossing guards and walk with groups of children, organize safe driving activities, or can host a reception at school.

What now? This is a great start for a successful Walk to School Day event. But if you want to do more, and make sure you're beginning to change things permanently to improve walking, visit the web page for "Keep the Momentum Going" by logging on to

<http://www.walktoschool-usa.org/momentum.htm>

Communities are doing amazing things to keep Walk to School alive and to make permanent community improvements so that everyone can walk all of the time.